

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GENERAL STRIKE POSSIBILITY GROWS

REF: BELFAST 139

1. SUMMARY: POSSIBILITY OF A GENERAL STRIKE BY ULSTER LOYALISTS DESIGNED TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE TOUGHER SECURITY MEASURES AND TO IMPLEMENT MAJORITY REPORT OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION HAS GROWN. UNIONIST ACTION COUNCIL PUBLISHED ADVERTISEMENT APRIL 26 GIVING SECRETARY OF STATE ONE WEEK TO MOVE ON THESE DEMANDS. GOVERNMENT VIEWING SITUATION AS SERIOUS. MORE MODERATE PROTESTANTS WOULD OPPOSE DISRUPTIVE ACTION SUCH AS STRIKE BUT THERE SENTIMENTS FOR DRAMATIC ACTION AMONG SMALL-TOWN AND RURAL LOYALISTS AND URBAN PARA-MILITARIES. END SUMMARY.

2. BELFAST NEWS LETTER (PROTESTANT READERSHIP) CARRIED QUARTER-PAGE ADVERTISEMENT OF UNITED UNIONIST ACTION COUNCIL (UAC) APRIL 26 GIVING SECRETARY OF STATE ROY MASON NOTICE "....THAT HE HAS SEVEN DAYS TO BEGIN A POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE
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OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE I.R.A. AND ANNOUNCE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION REPORT." AD JUXTAPOSES NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (NIO) SLOGAN "SEVEN YEARS IS ENOUGH" WITH SLOGAN "SEVEN DAYS IS ENOUGH" AND ADMONISHES, "THE ROAD IS OPEN TO YOU, MR. MASON. IF YOU DO NOT ACT NOW, ULSTER LOYALISTS WILL ACT. YOU HAVE GOT JUST SEVEN DAYS." "RESTORE DEMOCRACY" AND "SAVE ULSTER" SLOGANS FRAME A LOWER-CASE "GOD SAVE THE

QUEEN." UAC LEADERS HAVE REFUSED DESCRIBE ACTION PLANNED IF MR. MASON DOES NOT COOPERATE.

3. DAVID MC KITTRICK, NORTHERN EDITOR IRISH TIMES, FLATLY PREDICTED IN HEADLINE OF PAGE ONE LEAD ARTICLE IN PAPER TODAY "LOYALISTS WILL LAUNCH NORTHERN GENERAL STRIKE NEXT MONDAY." MC KITTRICK REPORTED UAC WILL CALL FOR GENERAL STOPPAGE OF WORK THAT DAY (MAY 2) AND ANNOUNCE BEGINNING OF GRADUAL RUN-DOWN IN ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

4. POSSIBILITY OF GENERAL STRIKE ON MODEL 1974 ULSTER WORKERS COUNCIL ACTION BEING TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY IN NORTHERN IRELAND. NIO TOOK OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED BY CALL ON SECSTATE MASON BY ORANGE ORDER LEADERS APRIL 25 TO ISSUE STATEMENT WHICH IS IN EFFECT A ROUND-UP OF RECENT SECURITY AND ECONOMIC MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT WITH ADDITION WARNING THAT ORANGE DELEGATION AND PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND SHOULD "....WEIGH VERY CAREFULLY WHAT THEIR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE IF CERTAIN ELEMENTS ATTEMPTED TO LEAD THEM IN THE DIRECTION OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION WHICH HAD NO BASIS IN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE." STATEMENT NOTED: (A) ACTION WOULD AFFECT OLD PEOPLE, CHILDREN, HOSPITAL PATIENTS AND MANY OTHERS, (B) ACTION WOULD HAVE DISASTROUS AFFECT ON INVESTMENT FROM ABROAD AND, (C) "...IT COULD NOT BE ASSUMED THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM WOULD LOOK WITH SYMPATHY AT ACTION OF THIS SORT IN THE LIGHT OF THE MANY MEASURES WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL CONDITION OF NORTHERN IRELAND." STATEMENT CONCLUDED WITH OBSERVATION THAT PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE MOST PLEASED WOULD BE PROVISIONAL IRA AND WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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CALL FOR GRAND ORANGE LODGE AND ALL OTHER LEADERS OPINION TO GIVE SUPPORT TO SECURITY FORCES. SECSTATE MASON HAD REJECTED NUMBER OF ORANGE CRITICISMS ON SECURITY POLICY, INCLUDING ONE THAT SECURITY FORCES WERE UNDER POLITICAL CONSTRAINT. HE ALSO RELEASED NEWS THAT SAS (SPECIAL AIR SERVICE) WAS ALSO OPERATING AS ANTI-TERRORIST FORCE "THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE."

5. VANGUARD UNIONISTS, UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) AND EDITORIALS IN BELFAST NEWS LETTER AND BELFAST IRISH NEWS (CATHOLIC READERSHIP) HAVE EXPRESSED VARYING DEGREES OF CONCERN AND DISAPPROVAL ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF STRIKE. DENNIS HAUGHEY SDLP CHAIRMAN SAID: "IF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FAIL TO MEET THE CHALLENGE IT WILL BE OBVIOUS THAT THEY HAVE ABDICATED THEIR SOVEREIGNTY IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE ONLY LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE WILL BE FOR THEM TO PACK THEIR BAGS AND GO." REPORTING OFFICER BELIEVES THAT OFFICIAL UNIONISTS AND LEADERSHIP ORANGE ORDER ALSO DISAPPROVE STRIKE BUT IT NOW RPT

NOW SEEMS THERE COMBINATION RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN LOYALISTS AND
URBAN PARAMILITARIES WHO FAVOR DRAMATIC ACTION. REPORTING
OFFICER ALSO BELIEVES THAT BRITISH POLITICAL AND SECURITY
POLICIES TOWARD ULSTER IN PAST TWO YEARS HAVE BEEN BEST
POSSIBLE IN CIRCUMSTANCES AND, IRONICALLY, IN SECURITY
FIELD ARE PAYING OFF IN STEADY, ALBEIT SLOW, GAINS BY
ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY AND COURTS OVER PROVISIONAL IRA.
SOME OF THIS PROGRESS REFLECTS COOPERATION OF THE COMMUNITY
AGAINST TERRORISM.

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